

Contained use of genetically modified micro-organisms GMM (amend. Directive 90/219/EEC)

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The Committee feels that, in a field of technological development where risk assessment involves a number of unknown factors and where public acceptance is of fundamental importance, decisions to amend the existing rules should be taken with great caution, and be subject to maximum safety measures with a view to risk prevention. Only in this way can a sector offering considerable growth potential from the standpoint of production and employment gain the confidence of users and consumers and attract the necessary investment. It is precisely at the marketing stage that consumer concerns become apparent, as demonstrated by certain reactions to foodstuffs produced by genetic modification or genetically modified plants. The Committee welcomes an updating of Directive 219/90 to keep pace with technical and scientific progress, in terms of better definition and classification of risk levels, and hence of procedural simplification and of better technical protection, provided that the basic premises and philosophy of the Directives adopted in 1990 remain unchanged. It therefore regards the present proposal as an amendment of the existing legislation in the light of experience gained at Community and international level and not as a deregulation measure. It should be pointed out that the reason for adoption of specific Directives for genetically modified micro-organisms was acceptance of the idea that the risks associated with GMMs are not fully recognized in that a potential risk can derive from possible unforeseen effects of the building of new combinations of otherwise harmless components.